

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

CHEROKEE, FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S LETTER OF FEBRUARY 1, 1978

1. AMBASSADOR DINITZ GAVE THE FOLLOWING LETTER TO THE
SECRETARY ON FEBRUARY 1.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN TO TRANSMIT TO
YOU THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE:

"DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

I WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE WITH THANKS YOUR ORAL MESSAGE
DELIVERED TO ME ON SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 28TH.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 027676

SINCE THEN, OUR CABINET DECIDED TO RENEW THE TALKS WITHIN
THE FRAMEWORK OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE AND, YESTERDAY, OUR
DEFENSE MINISTER, EZER WEIZMAN, AND HIS COLLEAGUES LEFT FOR
CAIRO. I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT SEVERAL OF MY COLLEAGUES
EXPRESSED STRONG RESERVATIONS AT THIS CABINET DECISION
BECAUSE, ON THE VERY DAY IT WAS TAKEN, A TRULY VIRULENT
ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE EGYPTIAN WEEKLY, "OCTOBER",

WRITTEN BY A PERSON CLOSE TO PRESIDENT SADAT.

I PREFER, MR. PRESIDENT, NOT TO QUOTE THE UGLY PASSAGES JUST AS I SHALL REFRAIN FROM REPEATING THE OTHER RECENT SLANDERS OF THE CONTROLLED EGYPTIAN PRESS. SUFFICE IT TO SAY, IT IS TOO PAINFUL AN EXERCISE.

THE VIEW I EXPRESSED TO MY COLLEAGUES WAS THAT A LINE OF DISTINCTION HAS TO BE DRAWN BETWEEN THE PREVIOUS SLURS THAT WERE AN INTOLERABLE ATTACK AGAINST THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND THE MOST RECENT DIATRIBE THAT WAS AN ATTACK AGAINST ME PERSONALLY. MY COLLEAGUES CONTENDED, IN RETURN, THAT IN VIEW OF MY OFFICE, THE EXCESSES DO CONSTITUTE A SLANDER AGAINST THE NATION AND THAT THE PROPER CONSEQUENCES BE DRAWN. I STOOD BY MY DISTINCTION, HOWEVER, EXPLAINING THAT I AM NOT UNUSED TO BEING THE OBJECT OF NAME-CALLING. I AM GRATIFIED THAT THE POSITIVE DECISION TO AUTHORIZE THE MISSION TO CAIRO WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ADOPTED.

IT IS MY PRAYER AND HOPE, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT THE TALKS IN CAIRO - BOTH THOSE OF DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN AND OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON - WILL PROVE TO BE FRUITFUL. I MUST VOICE TO YOU AGAIN MY CONVICTION THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE IN JERUSALEM COULD AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN FRUITFUL HAD THEY NOT BEEN SUMMARILY DISRUPTED ON ACCOUNT OF A SURPRISING
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 027676

INSTRUCTION WHICH SECRETARY VANCE, LIKE MYSELF, CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN A MISTAKE.

NOW, PRESIDENT SADAT WILL BE RECEIVED BY YOU FOR IMPORTANT TALKS IN WHICH OUR PEACE PLAN WILL, I TRUST, BE AIRED. YOU WILL RECALL, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT I BROUGHT THIS PLAN TO YOU, IN BOTH ITS PARTS, IN DECEMBER 1977. AS ALWAYS, OUR DELIBERATIONS WERE CANDID AND FRIENDLY AND I LEFT WASHINGTON HEARTENED BY YOUR INCISIVE PERCEPTIONS AND APPRAISALS.

I RECENTLY REVIEWED THE COMPREHENSIVE NOTES RECORDED AT OUR MEETING IN THE CABINET ROOM AND I WAS MOVED AND ENCOURAGED WHEN READING, AGAIN, A PASSAGE OF OUR CONVERSATION OF DECEMBER 17, 1977. IT READS:

THE PRIME MINISTER: IN THE NORTH (OF SINAI) WE HAVE THE PROBLEM OF THE AREA BETWEEN RAFIAH AND EL-ARISH. THERE ARE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS THERE. WE SUGGESTED THEY STAY. WE SHALL ALSO HAVE THERE U.N. FORCES AND THERE SHOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED A SMALL ISRAELI DEFENSE CONTINGENT. (THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO INDICATED ON THE MAP THE ISRAELI

SETTLEMENTS BETWEEN EILAT AND SHARM EL-SHEIKH). THIS IS

THE OUTLINE OF WHAT WE DECIDED TO DO TO ESTABLISH PEACE WITH EGYPT. IT IS A GREAT CHANGE AND FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW A GREAT RISK.

NOW I'D LIKE TO GO INTO THE SECOND PROBLEM.

(WE CAN'T GO INTO THE SYRIAN PROBLEM UNTIL ASSAD DECIDED DIFFERENTLY.)

THE PRESIDENT: I WISH FIRST TO SAY THAT, IN MY OPINION, THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS PROPOSAL THAT SADAT COULD NOT ACCEPT. IT IS VERY REASONABLE. THE TIME SCHEDULE SHOULD
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 027676

BE EXPEDITED.'

I WISH TO EMPHASIZE, AS I FEEL DUTY-BOUND TO DO AT THIS IMPORTANT JUNCTURE, THAT IN THE ISRAELI PEACE PLAN WE COULD HAVE LEGITIMATELY CLAIMED RECTIFICATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY WITH EGYPT. TO HAVE DONE SO WOULD HAVE BEEN TO INVOKE THE MOST SOLEMN RIGHT UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW IN THE WAKE OF A WAR WHICH HAD BEEN 'THRUST UPON ISRAEL' (A TERM WHICH YOUR PREDECESSORS EMPLOYED IN EXCHANGES WITH MINE TIME AND AGAIN). THE SIX DAY WAR OF 1967 WAS A WAR OF LEGITIMATE NATIONAL SELF-DEFENSE IN THE HIGHEST SENSE OF THE TERM, WITH ALL THAT THIS IMPLIES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW.

HOWEVER, AS YOU KNOW, MR. PRESIDENT, THE CURRENT ISRAELI PEACE PROPOSAL REFRAINS FROM PUTTING FORTH THIS RIGHTFUL DEMAND. WE REFRAINED FROM DOING SO FOR THE SAKE OF COMPROMISE AND PEACE. THESE WERE ALSO THE PURPOSES THAT LED US TO REVOKE THE DECISION OF DECEMBER 1968 ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE LATE LEVI ESHKOL AND SUBSEQUENTLY REAFFIRMED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF MRS. GOLDA MEIR AND MR. YITZHAK RABIN, DETERMINING THAT, IN PEACE, ISRAEL SHALL RETAIN CONTROL OF A LAND STRIP LINKING EILAT WITH SHARM EL-SHEIKH.

MAY I SAY THAT, IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, I CONSIDER IT TO BE ONE OF THE IRONIES OF OUR TIMES THAT, HAVING MADE SUCH A SWEEPING AND FAR-REACHING PEACE PROPOSAL, THIS GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL SHOULD BE THE OBJECT OF SUCH LUDICROUS CHARGES AS 'INTRANSIGENT', 'NOT FORTHCOMING', AND SO FORTH.

I AM NOT DISCOURAGED BY SUCH MISREPRESENTATIONS SINCE I
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 027676

WHOLE-HEARTEDLY BELIEVE, AS YOU DO, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT
IT IS THE NATURE OF TRUTH TO CONQUER AND THAT THE DIS-
TORTIONS WILL INEVITABLY SPEND THEMSELVES.

MR. PRESIDENT, IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT OF TRUST THAT I
EARNESTLY ENTREAT YOU TO USE YOUR INFLUENCE TO IMPRESS
UPON PRESIDENT SADAT NOT ONLY OUR GENUINE DESIRE FOR PEACE
BUT, EQUALLY, AS YOU PUT IT, THE 'VERY REASONABLE' NATURE
OF OUR PEACE PROPOSAL. THERE ARE GENUINE GROUNDS TO
BELIEVE THAT, IN SO DOING DURING YOUR EXCHANGES WITH
PRESIDENT SADAT - AS IN YOUR TALKS WITH ME - AN EGYPTIAN-
ISRAELI PEACE TREATY, AS A FIRST STEP TO A COMPREHENSIVE
SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WILL NOT ONLY PROVE
FEASIBLE - IT WILL, INDEED, BECOME A FACT.

YOURS RESPECTFULLY AND SINCERELY,

MENACHEM BEGIN"

RESPECTFULLY YOURS,

(SIGNED) SIMCHA DINITZ
AMBASSADOR

END TEXT. VANCE

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NNN

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